

Johnston Annie Fellows

Georgina's Service Stars



Annie Johnston
Georgina's Service Stars

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Johnston Annie F. Annie Fellows Georgina's Service Stars

PART I

"My salad days, when I was green in judgment."

CHAPTER I

GEORGINA BEGINS HER MEMOIRS

Up the crooked street which curves for three miles around the harbor comes the sound of the Towncrier's bell. It seems strange that he should happen along this morning, just as I've seated myself by this garret window to begin the story of my life, for it was the sound of his bell five years ago which first put it into my head to write it. And yet, it isn't so strange after all, when one remembers the part the dear old man has had in my past. "Uncle Darcy," as I've always called him, has been mixed up with most of its important happenings.

That day, when I first thought of writing my memoirs, was in Spring house-cleaning time, and I had been up here all morning, watching them drag out old heirlooms from the chests and cubby-holes under the rafters. Each one had a history. From one of the gable windows I could look down on the beach at the very spot where the Pilgrims first landed, and away over on the tongue of sand, which ends the Cape, I could see the place where they say the old Norse Viking, Thorwald, was buried nine hundred years ago.

From this window where I am sitting, I looked down as I do now, on the narrow street with the harbor full of sails on one side and the gardens of the Portuguese fishermen spread out along the other, like blocks in a gay patchwork quilt. I remember as I stood looking out I heard Uncle Darcy's bell far down the street. He was crying a fish auction. And suddenly the queer feeling came over me that I was living in a story-book town, and that I was a part of it all, and some day I must write that story of it and me.

I did not begin it then, being only ten years old at that time and not strong on spelling. It would have kept me continually hunting through the dictionary, or else asking Tippy how to spell things, and that would have led to her knowing all. Her curiosity about my affairs is almost unbelievable.

But there is no reason why I should not begin it now. "The Life and Letters of Georgina Huntingdon" ought to make interesting reading some of these days when I am famous, as I have a right to expect, me being the granddaughter of such a great Kentucky editor as Colonel Clayton Shirley. To write is in my blood, although on the Huntingdon side it's only dry law books.

I am going to jot down all sorts of innermost things in this blank book which will not be in the printed volume, because I might pass away before it is published, and if any one else had to undertake it he could do it more understandingly if he knew my secret ambitions and my opinion of life and people. But I shall bracket all such private remarks with red ink, and put a warning on the fly-leaf like the one on Shakespeare's tomb: "Cursed be he who moves these bones."

He would have been dug up a thousand times, probably, if it had not been for that, so I shall protect the thoughts buried here between these red brackets in the same way.

"Cursed be he who prints this part
From the inmost sanctum of my heart."

Up to this time there has been little in my life important enough to put into a record, so it is just as well that I waited. But now that this awful war is going on over in Europe, all sorts of thrilling things may begin to happen to us any minute. Father says there's no telling how soon our country may be fighting, too. He thinks it's shameful we haven't been doing our part all along. As he is a naval surgeon and has been in the service so many years, he will be among the first to be drawn into the thick of danger and adventure.

I am old enough now to understand what that will mean to us all, for I am fifteen years and eleven months, and could easily pass for much older if Barby would only let me put my hair up. Barby is the dearest mother that ever lived, and I wouldn't for worlds appear to be criticizing her, but she

is a bit old-fashioned in some of her ideas about bringing up children. I believe she and Tippy would like to keep me the rest of my mortal life, "standing with reluctant feet where the brook and river meet," regardless of the fact that I am all ready to wade in and fully able to do so.

I asked Tippy why nobody ever quotes that verse farther along in the poem, which exactly expresses my sentiments:

"Then why pause with indecision,
When bright angels in thy vision
Beckon thee to fields Elysian?"

It stumped her to think of an answer for a moment, and she made an excuse of putting the cat out, in order to give herself more time. But when she came back all she had found to say was that I needn't think being grown up was any field Elysian. I was eating my white bread now, and if a girl only knew all that lay ahead of her she'd let well enough alone. She'd wait for trouble to come to her instead of running to meet it.

Somehow I don't believe Tippy ever had any bright angels beckoning her, else she couldn't be so pessimistic about my growing up. I can't think of her as ever being anything but an elderly widow with her hair twisted into a peanut on the back of her head. And yet she had a lover once, and a wedding day, or she couldn't be Mrs. Maria Triplett now. But it's impossible to think of her as being gay fifteen and dancing down the stairs to meet the morning with a song. One feels that she met it with a broom, saying:

"Shall birds and bees and ants be wise
While I my moments waste?
O let me with the morning rise
And to my duties haste."

She's said that to me probably as much as five hundred times. I shall bracket this part about her just as soon as I can get a bottle of red ink. But how I'm going to account to her for having red ink in my possession is more than I know.

That's the worst about being the only child in a family. They're all so fond of you and so interested in your sayings and doings, that they watch every movement of your mind and body. You're like a clock in a glass case with your works open to the gaze of the older people. It's all very well during the first years for them to keep tab on your development, but the trouble is most relatives never seem to know when you're developed, and have reached the point where a little privacy is your *right*. It's maddening to have to give a reason every time you turn around.

All the lives of noted people which I have read begin with the person's birthplace and who his parents were, and his early acts which showed he gave promise of being a genius. So I'll pause right here for a brief outline of such things.

My name is Georgina Huntingdon. A name to be proud of – so Tippy has always impressed on me – and one hard to live up to. She used to show it to me on the silver christening cup that came down to me from the great-great-aunt for whom I am named. She'd take the tip of my finger in hers and solemnly trace the slim-looped letters around the rim, till I came to feel that it was a silver name, and that I must keep it shining by growing up unusually smart and good. That I owed it to the cup or the great-aunt or the Pilgrim monument or *something*, to act so as to add lustre to the name.

Tippy is a distant cousin on father's side. She has lived with us ever since Barby brought me up here from Kentucky, where I was born. Father, being a naval surgeon, was off in foreign ports most of the time, and Barby, being such a young and inexperienced mother, needed her companionship. Barby is lots younger than father. It was hard for her at first, coming away with just me, from that

jolly big family down South who adored her, to this old Cape Cod homestead that had been boarded up so long.

Lonely and gray, it stands at the end of town, up by the breakwater, facing the very spot on the beach where the Pilgrims landed. One of them was an ancestor of mine, so the big monument overlooking the harbor and the tip of the Cape was put up partly in his honor.

Really, several pages might well be devoted to my ancestors, for one was a minute-man whose name is in the history I studied at school. His powder-horn hangs over the dining-room mantel, and Tippy used to shame me with it when I was afraid of rats or the dark cellarway. If I were asked to name three things which have influenced me most in arousing my ambition to overcome my faults and to do something big and really worth while in the world, I'd name my christening cup, that Pilgrim monument and the old powder-horn.

With such a heritage it is unthinkable that I should settle down to an ordinary career. Something inside of me tells me that I am destined to make my name an honored household word in many climes. I've considered doing this in several ways.

It might be well to mention here that my earliest passion was for the stage. That will explain why quotations came so trippingly from my tongue at times. I learned yards and yards of poems and Shakespeare's plays for declamation, and I'm always given one of the leading parts in the amateur theatricals at the High School or the Town Hall. My looks may have something to do with that, however. As it might seem conceited for me to describe myself as my mirror shows me, I'll just paste some newspaper clippings on this page describing different plays I've been in. Several of them speak of my dark eyes and glowing complexion, also my "wealth of nut-brown curls," and my graceful dancing.

But in my Sophomore year at High School I began to feel that literature might be my forte, even more than acting. R. B. (which initials will stand for "red brackets" until I get the ink). The reason for that feeling is that my themes in English were always marked so high that the class nicknamed me "Abou ben Ahdem."

Last summer I began a novel called "Divided," which the girls were crazy about. It was suggested by Jean Ingelow's poem by that name and is awfully sad. Really, it kept me so depressed that I found I wasn't half enjoying my vacation. I simply lived the heroine's part myself.

Now that I am a Senior, it seems to me that Journalism offers a greater field than fiction. We had a debate last term which convinced me of it. George Woodson had the affirmative, and I didn't mind being beaten because he used grandfather for one of his arguments, and said so many nice things about his editorials being epoch-making and his inspired phrases moulding public opinion, and being caught up as slogans by all parties, leading on to victory. He spoke, too, of them being quoted not only by *Punch* and the *London Times*, but by papers in France and Australia.

R. B. (I am fully determined either to write the leading novel of the century, or to own and edit a newspaper which shall be a world-power.)

The seashore was my first schoolroom. Barby taught me to write in the sand and to spell words with shells and pebbles. I learned Arithmetic by adding and subtracting such things as the sails in the harbor and the gulls feeding at ebb-tide. On stormy days when we were home-bound, I counted the times the fog-bell tolled, or in the early dark counted how often Wood End lighthouse blinked its red eye at me.

But I must get on with my story. If I am to have room in this book for all the big happenings of life, which I feel sure lie ahead of me, I cannot devote too much space to early memories, no matter how cherished. Probably in the final revision all the scenes I have lived through will be crowded into one act or chapter. I may start it in this fashion:

Time

First fifteen years of life just ended.

Place

An ancient fishing town between the sand-dunes and the sea, where artists flock every summer to paint, its chief attraction for them seeming to be its old streets and wharves, the Cape Cod people whom they call "quaint" and the Portuguese fisher-folk.

Principal characters besides myself and family, already described.

Daniel Darcy

The old Towncrier, whom I call "Uncle Darcy" and love as dearly as if he were really kin to me.

Aunt Elspeth

His wife. They are my ideal Darby and Joan.

Captain Kidd

A darling Irish terrier, half mine and half Richard's.

Richard Moreland

Who comes every summer to stay with his cousin, Mr. James Milford, in the bungalow with the Green Stairs. He has been like an own brother to me since the days when we first played pirate together, when he was "Dare-devil Dick, the Dread Destroyer," and I was "Gory George, the Menace of the Main." Barby took him under her wing then because his own mother was dead and they've been devoted to each other ever since.

This summer Richard came alone, because his father, who always spends his vacations with him, did not come back from his Paris studio as usual. He is in the trenches now, fighting with the Allies. His friends shake their heads when they speak of him, and say what a pity such a brilliantly gifted fellow should run the risk of being killed or maimed. It would be such a terrible waste. He could serve his age better with his brush than a bayonet.

But when Richard talks of him his face lights up as if he fairly worships him for being such a hero as to sacrifice his art for the cause and go in just as a private. He has said to me a dozen times, "That is why the Allies will win this war, Georgina, because men like *Dad* are putting it through. They are fighting with their souls as well as their bodies."

That's all Richard talks about now. He's perfectly wild to go himself. Though he's only seventeen and a half, he is six feet tall and so strong he could take a man's place. He says if they'd so much as give him a chance to drive an ambulance he'd be satisfied, but his father won't consent.

He's running his Cousin James' car this summer instead of the regular chauffeur, and keeping it in repair. Mr. Milford pays him a small salary, and (nobody knows it but me) Richard is saving every cent. He says if he can once get across the water he'll find some way to do his part. In the meantime he's digging away at his French, and Uncle Darcy's son Dan is teaching him wireless. He's so busy some days I scarcely see him. It's so different from the way it was last summer when he was at our house from morning till night.

The same jolly crowds are back this summer at the Gray Inn and the Nelson cottage, and Laura Nelson's midshipman cousin from Annapolis is here for a week. I shall not name and describe them now, but simply group them as minor characters.

Laura says, however, that she feels sure that the midshipman is destined to be anything but a minor character in my life. She prophesies he will be leading man in a very short while. That is so silly in Laura, although, of course, she couldn't know just how silly, because I've never explained to her that I am dedicated to a Career.

I have not said positively that I shall never marry, and sometimes I think I might be happier to have a home and about four beautiful and interesting children; that is, if it could be managed without interfering with my one great ambition in life. But positively, that must come first, *no matter what the cost*. Only thus can I reach the high goal I have set for myself and write mine as "one of the few, the immortal names that were not born to die."

CHAPTER II

THE MISUNDERSTOOD 'TEENS

"O for a lodge in some vast wilderness" where I could write without anybody butting in to ask what I'm doing! I suppose it's the penalty I must pay now for having been such a vain little peacock in the beginning. Because father praised my first letters when I was learning to write, I passed them over to the family for more praise before sealing them. Now they've grown to feel that it is their right to read them, and to expect it as a matter of course.

It is the same way with all my attempts at stories and verses. If I should take to turning the key in the door at this late day, they'd think it queer, and I'm afraid Barby would feel a bit hurt and shut out of my life, because we've always shared everything of that sort.

So I just carry the book around with me in my knitting bag, and scribble a few lines whenever there is an opportunity. Most of this will have to be written down on the beach where I am now. It's too hot up in the garret these days. I sit cross-legged in the sand behind an overturned rowboat, drawn up out of reach of the tide. All that can be seen of me from the house is a big garden hat flopping down over the shoulders of my pink smock. Smocks and flopping hats are as common as clams in this old fishing town, full of artists and summer girls, so when I tuck my "wealth of nut-brown curls" up out of sight, nobody recognizes me at a little distance. If any one comes along I begin knitting on a bright blue muffler that I'm making for a Belgian orphan. It seems dreadfully deceitful, but what else can I do?

I haven't any place where I can keep the book between times. Tippy is such a thorough-going housekeeper that she knows what is in every drawer and closet in this house, from top to bottom. Neither she nor Barby would dream of reading a diary or even a scrap of writing belonging to any one else but me. But they think of me as a part of themselves, I suppose, or as still such an infant that if they were to come across this they'd smile indulgently and say, "The dear child. Was anything ever so diverting and clever!" And they'd read it with that pleased, proud expression you see on a family's face when they discover the baby's first tooth or find that it can stand alone.

I'd keep it at Uncle Darcy's, down at Fishburn Court, but I seldom go down there now oftener than once a week, and I want to make a practice of filling a few pages every day.

Fishburn Court would be an ideal place in which to write. It's a cluster of little old houses set around the edge of a sand dune, and hidden away from the heart of the town by some tall buildings. A crooked, sandy lane leads into it from one of the back streets. There's an apple-tree in Uncle Darcy's yard with thick grass under it, and a two-seated wooden swing where an old yellow-nosed cat sleeps all day. You can look up and see billowy white clouds floating in the blue overhead, and smell the salt of the sea, but it's so shut in that although it's only a short distance from the beach you barely hear the chug of the motor boats, and the street cries are so faint, that you feel you're far, far away from the world, like a nun in a cloister.

Sitting there, I've sometimes thought I'd like to be that – a nun in a cloister, to walk with rapt, saint-like face, my hands folded lily-wise over my breast. It must be lovely to feel that one is a pure white saint, a bride of heaven. Sometimes I think I'd rather be that than a world-renowned author.

I often wonder what great part I'm destined to play in the universe. Really the world is so full of things to do and be, that one needs as many lives as a cat. I'd like one life in which to be a nun, another an actress, another in which to shine as a peerless wit and beauty, the social leader in a brilliant salon like that great French madame – I can't think of her name. Then, of course, there's the life I want for my literary career, and one in which to be just a plain wife and mother.

One thing is certain, if I ever have a daughter I'll try to remember how a girl feels at my age; although I don't see how one who has been one can ever forget. And there are *some* things she shall be allowed to decide for herself. R. B. (As long as I was a mere child Barby seemed to understand

me perfectly. But now that I lack only one paltry inch of being as tall as she is, she doesn't seem able to get my point of view at all. She doesn't seem to realize that I've put away childish things, and that when you're in your teens you're done with doll-rags.)

There is nothing so bitter in life as being misunderstood. If you have cruel step-parents who mistreat you out of pure meanness, everybody sympathizes with you. But if you have devoted own parents who hurt you through a mistaken idea that they're doing it for your own good, nobody sympathizes with you. I'd rather be beaten or locked in my room on bread and water than have Minnie Waite or Daisy Poole tagging after me forevermore.

I wasn't at home the day Mrs. Saxe came around, organizing the "Busy Bees" to do Red Cross work for the Belgians. But Barby put my name down and paid the fifty cents dues, and said I'd be *glad* to do my part. Well, I am glad, but I'd already been trying to do it ever since the war started "over there." I've rolled bandages every Saturday afternoon and taken part in two plays and waited on the table at all the lawn fetes, and I'm knitting my sixth sweater for French and Belgian orphans.

But I draw the line at being a "Busy Bee," and meeting around with a lot of little girls not one of them over thirteen and most of them younger. And Minnie Waite has a crush on me anyhow, and is harder to get rid of than a plague of sand-fleas. I could have cried when Barby told me what she had let me in for, and I couldn't help sounding cross when I said she might at least have consulted me first. It was too much to have that miserable bunch of kids wished on to me.

But Barby only reminded me that I was using slang, and said cheerfully, "Did it ever occur to you, Baby Mine, that you are three whole years younger than Laura Nelson, and yet you want to be with her every moment? Possibly she may feel that *you* are tagging."

Laura is one of the summer girls, and Barby never has approved of our intimacy, just because she is so much older and has college men coming to see her now instead of High School boys and all that sort of thing. I didn't attempt to explain to Barby that we are as congenial as twins, and that Laura seeks my society quite as much as I do hers. I think Barby hoped that I'd become so interested in the Busy Bees that I wouldn't have any time for Laura, and she said a great deal about them needing a leader, and how much good I could do if I went into it as an enthusiastic president instead of a half-hearted one.

Of course, when she put it that way, the privilege and duty of being an inspiration whenever possible, I had to give in as gracefully as I could. But I'm done now, after yesterday's performance.

I was over at Laura's to lunch. Her midshipman cousin, Mr. Tucker, was off on a fishing trip, but he was to be back early in the afternoon and she wanted me to take him off her hands while she talked to some one else. Her most ardent admirer was coming to call.

So she put my hair up for me the way she wears hers, flat over her ears and a sort of soft, fluffy whirl on top, and loaned me a pair of her green silk stockings and high-heeled white slippers, instead of my "growing girl" pumps that Father insists upon. I have somewhere read that "The consciousness of being well dressed imparts a blissfulness to the human heart that even religion is powerless to give or take away, and its importance can hardly be over-estimated by the feminine mind."

I heartily agree, for just that difference in hair and heels made me feel and act perfectly grown up. I knew that Mr. Tucker thought I was as old as I seemed from the way he called me "Miss Huntingdon." And he had such a complimentary way of looking at me, and was so appreciative of my repartee that I found it easier to talk to him than any one I had ever met before. I found myself discussing the deep questions of life with him with an ease I couldn't have had, if I had been conscious of juvenile curls bobbing over my shoulders.

But right in the middle of our interesting conversation came the most awful racket. A donkey-cart full of girls drove in from the street, past the window where we were sitting. Minnie Waite was standing up, driving, her hair streaming like a wild Amazon. And they all yodelled and catcalled till I went out on the porch. It was the dreadfulest noise you ever heard, for the donkey balks every other

step unless he's headed for home, and the only way they can make him travel is to shake a tin can half-full of pebbles behind him.

They asked had I forgotten that the Busy Bees were to have an extra meeting at my house to dress dolls for the Bazaar, and the whole bunch was over there waiting. They couldn't start till I got there, me being president, and my mother said for me to get straight into the cart and go back with them.

I knew perfectly well that Barby had never sent any such sounding message as that, but I also knew the only way to keep them from making matters worse was to get them away as soon as possible. They were talking at the tops of their voices, and nobody knew what they'd say next. The quickest way to stop them was to climb into that babyish donkey-cart and jolt off with them, just like a kid myself.

So I ran back and explained to Laura and made my hurried adieux. Mr. Tucker went down the steps with me to help me in. Of course, those horrid children noticed my green stockings, as I'd never worn that color before, and they made remarks about them and my high heels, when I tripped going down the steps, not being used to them. I would have fallen all over myself if Mr. Tucker hadn't caught me. He didn't seem to hear what they were saying, but Laura's little sister Dodo, who was hanging over the railing of the upstairs porch, listening like the long-eared little pitcher that she is, called down in her high, shrill voice:

"Oh, Georgina! You've forgotten your pumps, and are going off in Laura's. Wait. I'll throw them down to you."

Well, of course the donkey balked just then and wouldn't start till they began rattling the tin can full of stones, and in the midst of the pandemonium there was a whack-bang! on the porch steps, and down came my old flat-heeled Mary-Jane pumps, with my white stockings stuffed inside of them. Mr. Tucker picked them up and put them in the cart. He made some awfully nice, polite speech about Cinderella, but I was so mortified and so mad that I turned perfectly plum-colored I am sure. As we dashed off I wished I could be a *real* busy bee for about a minute. A vicious one.

Now I feel that I never want to lay eyes on Mr. Tucker again after such a humiliating experience. It is a pity, for he is the most congenial man I ever met. Our views on the deeper things of life are exactly the same.

The worst of it is I can't explain all that to Barby. She made light of the affair when I cried, and told her how the girls had mortified and embarrassed me. Said it was foolish to take such a trifle to heart so bitterly; that probably Mr. Tucker would never give it a second thought, or if he did he would laugh over the incident and the little girl, and forget them entirely.

But that was cold comfort. I couldn't tell her that I didn't want to be laughed at, and I didn't want to be forgotten by the first and only really congenial man I had ever met. Yet I might have told her all that if she had approached me differently. I long to confide in her if she would talk to me as one woman to another.

Instead, she referred to a little Rainbow Club that Richard and I started long ago. We pretended that every time we made anyone happy it was the same as making a rainbow in the world. She asked me if I was tired of being her little prism, and to think how happy I could make those girls by interesting myself in their affairs, and a whole lot more like that.

It made me so cross to be soothed in that kind, kindergarten way that while she was talking I burrowed back in my closet as if looking for something and said "*Darn!*" in a hollow whisper, between set teeth. One can't "be a kitten and cry mew" always.

CHAPTER III IN THE SHADOW OF WAR

Last Wednesday I spent the day at Fishburn Court. My visits seem to mean so much to Aunt Elspeth, now that her time is divided between her bed and wheeled chair. I improvised a costume and did the song and dance for her that I am going to give in the French Relief entertainment next week. And I made a blueberry pie for dinner, and set the little kitchen in shining order, and put fresh bows on her cap, and straightened out all the bureau drawers.

When everything you do is appreciated and admired and praised until you are fairly basking in approval, it makes you feel so good inside that you want to keep on that way forever. You just *love* to be sweet and considerate. But afterwards it's such a comedown to go back home to those who take it as a matter of course that you should be helpful, and who feel it is their duty to improve your character by telling you what *your* duty is. It rubs you the wrong way, and makes life much harder.

Somehow, going to Fishburn Court is like climbing up into the Pilgrim monument and looking down on the town. Seen from that height, the things that loomed up so big when you were down on their level shrink to nothing. Maybe it is because Uncle Darcy and Aunt Elspeth have lived so very, very long that they can look down on life that way and see it from a great height as God does. I always think of them when I read that verse, "A thousand years in thy sight is but as yesterday." That is why nothing seems to matter to them very much but loving each other and their neighbors as themselves.

I came away from there resolved to turn over a new leaf. I am sorry now that I said what I did the other day in the closet, but I don't feel that I have a right to blot it out of this record. The good and the bad should stand together in one's memoirs. It makes a character seem more human. I never felt that I had anything in common with Washington until I read that he sometimes gave away to violent fits of anger.

I am now resolved to make those Busy Bees the power for good which Barby thinks I can, and quit thinking of my own feelings in the matter, of how disagreeable it is to have them eternally tagging after me. After all, what difference will it make a thousand years from now if they do tag? What difference if one little ant in the universe is happy or unhappy for one atom of time? When you think of yourself that way, as just a tiny ant sitting on the equator of eternity you can put up with almost anything.

A whole week has gone by since I wrote the above sentence, and in that time the most exciting thing has happened, in addition to celebrating my sixteenth birthday. The birthday came first. Barby's gift to me was a darling rowboat, light and graceful as a cockle-shell. Uncle Darcy carved my initials on the oars, and Richard came after dark the night before and dragged it up into the yard, and tied it under the holiday tree. Next morning my presents were all piled in the boat instead of being tied to the branches, for which I was very thankful. It made me feel that I had come to a boundary line which the family recognized, when they discarded the old custom of decorating the holiday-tree. They no longer considered me an infant.

I have been wild for a boat of my own for two years, and was so excited I could scarcely eat my breakfast. I was out in it all day, first with Barby and Richard, and, afterward, with Babe Nolan and Judith Gilfred, who came to lunch. Ordinarily, I would fill pages describing my presents and what we did, but I can't wait to tell the climax.

Late in the afternoon Richard came again and rowed me over to the Lighthouse and back. When we came up the beach on our way home to supper the sun was just setting. It was all so beautiful and I was so happy that I began humming "The End of a Perfect Day." But it wasn't the end, for when we went into the house the exciting thing happened. Who should rise up suddenly in the dusk and put his arms around me but *Father*, home on unexpected shore leave. I hadn't seen him for a year.

Even Barby didn't know he was coming. It seemed too good to be true that he should be in time for the lighting of my birthday candles. As if it wasn't more than enough just to have him back again, safe and sound, he brought me the most adorable little wrist-watch, and from then on till midnight when my eyes weren't on him they were on it. It's so heavenly to have everybody in the world that you love best and everything you want most all together at the same time.

We had to talk fast and crowd as much as possible into the hours. I felt that I had at last stepped into my field Elysian, when nobody said a word about my running along to bed. I think they would have let me sit up though, even if I hadn't been sixteen, the time was so precious.

Up till this time the war had seemed a faraway, unreal thing, just like the tales we used to shudder over, of the heathen babies thrown to the crocodiles. I had been working for the Red Cross and the Belgian orphans in the same spirit that I've worked for the Missionary Society, wanting to help the cause, but not feeling it a personal matter. But when Father talked about it in his grave, quiet way, I began to understand what war really is. It is like a great wild beast, devouring our next-door neighbors and liable to spring at our throats any minute. It is something everybody should rise up and help to throttle.

I understand now why Richard is so crazy on the subject. It isn't just thirst for adventure, as his cousin James says, although "Dare-devil Dick" is a good name for him. He sees the danger as Father sees it, and wants to do his part to rid the world of it. He talked a long time with Father, begging him to use his influence to get him into some kind of service over there. But Father says the same thing that Mr. Moreland did. That he's too young, and the only thing for him to do is to go back to school in the fall and fit himself for bigger service when his country has greater need of him. Richard went off whistling, but I knew he was horribly disappointed from the way his hat was pulled down over his eyes.

The next morning when I went down to breakfast I felt as if the wild beast had already sprung as far as our door-step, if not actually at our throats, for Barby sat pale and anxious-eyed behind the coffee urn, and her lips were trembly when I kissed her good-morning. Father had received his orders to report in Washington in forty-eight hours, and we had hoped to keep him with us at least two weeks. He is called to a consultation about some extensive preparations to be made for marine hospital work. He had already been notified that he was to be put at the head of it, and he may have to go abroad to study conditions, almost immediately.

I knew from the dumb misery in Barby's eyes she was thinking of the same things I was – submarines and sunken mines, etc., but neither of us mentioned them, of course. Instead, we tried to be as jolly as possible, and began to plan the nicest way we could think of to spend our one day together. Suddenly Father said he'd settle it. He'd spend it all with me, any way I chose, while Barby packed her trunk and got ready to go back to Washington with him. He'd probably be there a week or ten days and he wasn't going one step without her.

Then I realized how grown-up one really is at sixteen. A year ago I would have teased to be taken along, and maybe would have gone off in a corner and cried, and felt dreadfully left out over such an arrangement. But I saw the glance that passed between them when he said it, and I understood perfectly. Barby's face was radiant. You may adore your only child, but the love of your life comes first. And it should. I was *glad* they wanted to go off that way on a sort of second honeymoon trip. It would be dreadfully sad to have one's parents cease to be all in all to each other. Babe Nolan's mother and stepfather seem that way, bored to death with each other.

Two things stand out so vividly in that last day that I never can forget them. One is our walk down through the town, when I almost burst with pride, going along beside Father, so tall and distinguished looking in his uniform, and seeing the royal welcome people gave him at every step. They came out of the stores and the houses to shake hands with him, the people who'd known him as a little boy and gone to school with him, and they seemed so really fond of him and so glad to have him back, that I fairly loved them for it, even people I hadn't liked especially before.

The second thing was the talk we had up here in the garret in the gable window-seat, when he came up to look for some things he had packed away in one of the chests, twenty years ago.

We did lots of other things, of course; went rowing in the new boat to a place on the beach where he used to picnic when he was a boy. We took our lunch along and ate it there. Afterwards we tramped back into the dunes a little way, just to let him feel the Cape Cod sand in his shoes once more, he said. It was high tide when we got back to the boat-house, so we got our bathing suits and went in. He was so surprised and pleased at some of my diving stunts, and taught me a new one. He is a magnificent swimmer himself.

His hair is iron gray at the temples, and I've always been halfway afraid of him before – that is, afraid to say right out whatever I happened to think or feel. But it was different this time. I felt that he understood me better than anybody else in the world, even as well as Barby used to, when I was younger. As we went back home he said the nicest thing. He said it seemed to him that we must have been boys together at some time in our lives. That I was such a jolly good chum.

I can't think about that last evening or the going away yesterday morning without the tears starting. But I'm thankful I didn't break down at the station. I couldn't have kept from it if it hadn't been for Captain Kidd, who frisked along with us. Just at the hardest moment he stood up on his hind legs and saluted. I'd never seen him do it before. It's a trick Richard taught him lately. It was so cunning everybody laughed, and I managed to pull myself together till the train started.

But I made up for it when I got back home and came up here to the gable window-seat where Father and I had that last precious talk together, with his arm around me and my head on his shoulder. I nearly bawled my eyes out as I recalled each dear thing he said about my being old enough now to understand business matters, and what he wanted me to do in case the United States went to war; how I was to look after Barby if anything happened to him; and what I was to do for Uncle Darcy and Dan's children. That he relied on me just as if I were a son, because I was a true Huntingdon, and no Huntingdon woman had ever flinched from a duty or failed to measure up to what was expected of her.

I keep thinking, what if he should never come back to talk to me again in that near, dear way. But.. I'll have to stop before any more splashes blot up this page.

CHAPTER IV

HER IDEAL GIRL STEPS IN

All the time Barby was gone I didn't write a line in this record. I couldn't. Things seemed too trivial. Besides, the house had that strange, hushed air that you feel at a funeral when you're waiting for it to begin. I couldn't bear to touch the piano. It didn't seem right to be playing gay tunes while there was such awful sorrow in the world, and in all probability Father and Barby were spending their last days together.

I declined the invitation to Laura Nelson's dance on that account, and after Tippy had gone to bed I put on Barby's only black dress, a chiffon dinner gown that she had left behind in her closet, and sat by the window in the moonlight, listening to the music of piano and drum floating up from the Nelson cottage. I had turned the silver trimming in so as not to show, and looking down on the clinging black folds that trailed around me, I pictured to myself so vividly the way an orphan or a young widow must feel, that the tears splashed down into my lap till I was afraid it would make the chiffon all crinkly. The dance music sounded perfectly heartless to me. I could understand how bitter it might make one feel who was really in mourning.

When Barby came home and I told her about it, she said that I should have gone to the dance; that our first duty to ourselves and the world is to keep ourselves normal. After I'd spent the morning helping her unpack and hearing everything she had to tell about her week with Father and his departure to some unknown port, she told me she wanted me to stay out of doors all the rest of the day. I must go on the Quest of Cheerful Things, and she hoped that I'd be able to report at least two adventures.

The two things which happened are that I went to a furniture auction and met my ideal girl. While they're not particularly cheerful things, they're important enough to be recorded here.

It began by Babe Nolan bumping into me as I turned a corner, after I'd been out nearly half the afternoon. Babe is a far cry from anybody's ideal girl, that is, as far as looks and manners are concerned, but she has her good points. For one thing she is absolutely sincere, and it's always interesting to hear what new trouble she's been in.

She had her bathing suit bundled carelessly under her arm, and said she couldn't stay because she'd promised to be up at the West End beach by four o'clock, and it was almost that time then. But she'd heard that there was a furniture auction going on in front of the old Holloway house, which has been vacant for years, and she just had to go by and see if there was a white bedstead in the lot, with hollow brass balls on the posts. She was sure that there couldn't be, because she'd been told that the furniture had been brought up from Truro or Wellfleet, or some place down the Cape. It belonged to relatives of the Holloway family. Still she felt possessed to look, and she supposed she'd go through life like the Wandering Jew, looking for that bedstead and never finding it.

Then she told me why. Babe is very unfortunate in her family life, having a stepfather which complicates matters. All her brothers and sisters are either steps or halves. She has no whole ones. And they are all socialists in a way, believing in a community of interests, such as wearing each other's clothes without asking, and using each other's things. Right while Babe was talking to me she had on one of her half-brother Jim's outing shirts, turned in V at the neck instead of her own middie blouse, because Viola had walked off with her last clean one.

With everybody free to root through her bureau drawers, and with no locks in the house that work, of course she has absolutely no privacy, and she had several letters that she wouldn't have the family read for worlds. They were too sacred, and she couldn't bear to destroy them, for they breathed devotion in every line, and were her first of the kind. She thought of burying them under the garden hedge, but that would have necessitated digging them up every time she wanted to re-

read them, and there was danger of the puppy trailing her and unearthing them if she went too often to that hallowed spot.

One night just before she and Viola went to Yarmouth for a visit, she found, quite by accident, that the brass balls on her bedposts were screwed on and were hollow. So she folded the letters up small and stuffed them into one, with a dried rose and a broken cuff-link that had associations, and screwed it back tight.

What was her horror when she came home two weeks later to find that her mother had had the room done over in their absence as a surprise for her and Viola. She had bought twin beds of bird's-eye maple and given one old bed to a Salvation Army man who was going through town collecting junk, and sent the other to a camp up in the White Mountains where her mother's people go every year. She didn't know which went where.

Now there's no telling how, when or where those letters will next see the light of day. It was bad enough to lose the letters, but Babe says she'll simply die if they fall into her Aunt Mattie's hands. She's the prim, cold kind who makes you feel that anything sentimental should never be mentioned. It's something to be ashamed of. Tippy's that kind.

I have written all this out not because it's important in itself, but because it's a link in a chain. If I hadn't happened to meet Babe and go with her to hunt for that bedstead, I wouldn't have been at the auction when my ideal girl came along, or when Richard drove by and I hailed him to borrow a quarter, and he stopped and saw her. What she said and what he said, and what happened afterward was like a game of "Consequences."

All sorts of stuff lay around on the grass – dishes and bed-slats and odd andirons. There was a beaded mat and a glass case of wax flowers, and a motto, "The Lord is my Shepherd," cross-stitched in pink and gray worsted, sitting right out on the grass. Babe said probably it was the work of hands long dead and gone, and didn't it seem sad that they should come to this end? But the tide was in and she'd have to go. She might have known she'd not find that bedstead. Would I walk up to the beach with her?

But I told her no, I'd just rummage around awhile longer to see what else there was for sale. Maybe I could get some "local color" that way. Babe knows about my writing. She is one of the girls I read my novel to, and she respects my talent. So she left me. I did get some local color by staying, and took out my pencil and pad, which I always carry around in my knitting bag, and made a note of it.

An old-fashioned hoop-skirt was thrown across a rose-bush, and a black silk bonnet lay under it, beside a pair of worn shoes. Both the bonnet and the shoes had what Tippy calls a "genteel" air, and made me think they must have belonged to a prim maiden lady with proud nose and slender feet, probably called "Miss Althea." The name came to me like an inspiration, I could almost see her standing by the rose-bush.

Just then some boys, who were wrestling around, bumping into everything, upset a barrel on the grass, and a great pile of framed photographs came rolling out. Some of them were comical enough for a Sunday supplement, women in tight basques and little saucer hats, and men with whiskers – beards or perfectly ridiculous bushy "burnsides." A crowd of summer people began making joking remarks about them to set each other to laughing.

But there was one in an oval walnut frame that I couldn't bear to have them make fun of, the photograph of a lady with a little boy leaning against her shoulder. She had a strong, kind face, with such steadfast eyes looking straight at you, that you just knew everybody went to her with their troubles. The boy was a dear little fellow, serious as a judge, with his hair brushed in a long roll on the top of his head in one of those old-fashioned coxcomb curls.

One of the girls from the hotel picked it up and began declaiming a verse from "Somebody's Darling," that's in one of our school readers.

"Kiss him once for somebody's sake.

* * * * *

One bright curl from its fair mates take —
They were somebody's pride you know."

It came over me in a great wave how I would feel if it were Barby's picture thrown out that way for strangers to ridicule and step on, or the one I've always loved of Father, when he was a little boy, hugging his white rabbit. I felt that I simply must save it from further desecration. The only way was to buy it. The man said I could have any frame in the barrel, picture thrown in free, for twenty-five cents, without waiting for it to be put up at auction. They were in a hurry to get through. I told him I'd take it, then I discovered I hadn't a penny left in my knitting bag. I'd spent my last one on the way down, treating Babe to a soda water.

It was right while I was standing there with the frame in my hands, uncertain whether to go to the bakery and borrow a quarter or ask the man if he'd take my note for it till next day, that Judith Gilfred came into the yard with a girl I'd never seen before. I knew at a glance that it must be the cousin she'd been expecting from the South. She's talked about her for a month, and said such gushing things that I was prepared to see quite a pretty girl, but not the most beautiful one I had ever seen in my life. That's what she is, and also my ideal of all that is gracious and lovely and sweet.

She's a blonde with the most exquisite hair, the color of amber or honey, with little gold crinkles in it. And her eyes – well, they make you think of clear blue sapphires. I loved her from the moment Judith introduced us. Loved her smile, the way it lights up her face, and her voice, soft and slow, blurring her r's the way Barby does. From her little white-slipped feet to the jewelled vanity box on a slender chain around her neck, she looks exactly as I'd choose to look if I could make myself over. Her name is Esther Gilfred.

Judith must have told her as much about me as me about her, for she was so cordial and dear. Judith has been my most intimate friend ever since I started to school. Esther was so interested in the auction. One of her greatest charms I think is her enthusiasm for whatever you happen to be interested in. She made the picture I was carrying around seem doubly desirable, just by saying in that indescribably charming way of hers that antique frames are quite the rage now. There is such a fad for them in her town.

We must have spent more than half an hour poking around among all the queer old things being auctioned off, when I heard the honk of an automobile horn, which I recognized as Richard's. He was signaling me. He had slowed down as he came opposite the place, to see why such a crowd was gathered in there, and, as he did so, caught sight of us.

He stopped when I waved to him, and I ran out and asked him to loan me a quarter. As he fished one out of his pocket, he told me he'd take me home if I was ready to go.

So I ran back to pay for the frame, and ask the girls what time they'd be ready to go rowing next morning. While Judith was answering, Esther laid her hand on my arm in her enthusiastic way and exclaimed in a low tone, "Who is that young Apollo you spoke to? He has the most gorgeous dark eyes I ever saw, and the shoulders of an athlete. He's simply stunning!"

On the way home I told Richard what Esther said about him. He looked so pleased and conscious, that it was funny to watch his face.

"Which one said it?" he asked. "The little goldilocks in blue, or the one under the red parasol?"

I surely was astonished, for I had no idea that Richard was so observing. Heretofore, he had never seemed to notice how girls looked, or what they wore.

CHAPTER V

A PHOTOGRAPH AND SOME DAY-DREAMS

I don't believe compliments are good for the male mind. They go to their heads. Up to this time in all the years I've known Richard, I'd never seen him walk up to a mirror and deliberately stare at himself, except when we were having a face-making contest, and trying to see which could look the ugliest.

But the first thing he did after we went into the house was to stop in front of the hall mirror and square back his shoulders. Then he turned and looked at himself, a long, slow glance out of the corner of his eyes, and walked away with such a satisfied air that I was dying to laugh. All the rest of the evening he had a sort of set-up, lordly way about him that he had never had before. I am sure that it was the effect of Esther's compliment.

Barby asked him to stay to supper, and he did, to hear all about her Washington trip. He talked to her sort of over my head, as if I were a little girl who couldn't understand the great war measures which interested him. It amused me immensely, for every one knows that a girl of sixteen is far more mature than a boy of seventeen and a half. But I didn't say anything, just smiled to myself as I sat and knit and listened.

After supper when I brought out the oval frame to show the family what a bargain I got for a quarter, I had the surprise of my life. Tippy recognized the photograph in the frame. She said there were probably a dozen like it hanging up in various parlors in Wellfleet. It was the picture of a minister's wife she had known years ago. "Sister Wynne," everybody called her, whether they went to that church or not, because she was so widely beloved. The little boy's name was John.

When this little John was just a baby, Brother Wynne had a call to a big church out West. On the way there they came up to Provincetown to take the boat, and they stayed all night with Grandfather Huntingdon in this very house. Tippy was here on a visit at the time, and remembers it perfectly. Several years later the Wynnes had this picture taken to send back to friends in their old parish, and let them see how little John had grown. Miss Susan Triplett at Wellfleet has one.

It seems too strange for words to think that once upon a time they slept in our big downstairs guest chamber in the bed with the bird-o'-paradise valance and the pink silk tester, and that years and years afterward I should find their picture in a barrel at an auction, and bring it home and hang it up in that very room.

That's what I did after supper while Richard was drawing maps on the margin of the *Boston Transcript*, showing Barby where the Allies were entrenched. I washed the glass and drove a nail, and hung it up over a little serving table between the windows. Then I stepped back and held up the lamp to see the effect. It seemed to belong there, and the little fellow's big, serious eyes looked straight out at me, as if they were saying: "Yes, I know you, and I came back on purpose to be put into your story."

He seemed so real to me that as I went out, carrying the lamp, I looked back over my shoulder and whispered, "Good-night, little John Wynne."

Then I went upstairs to get another skein of yarn and wind it on Tippy's swift. All the time I was doing it I kept thinking of the events of the afternoon, and how beautiful Esther Gilfred looked – how adorable she was in every way. Those lines from Wordsworth came to my mind:

"She was a phantom of delight
When first she gleamed upon my sight."

Also she suggested that line "Queen rose of the rosebud garden of girls!" Suddenly I thought, why not write a poem to her my own self. At that, a whole list of lovely words went slipping through

my mind like beads along a string: lily.. pearl.. snow-crystal.. amber.. blue-of-deep-waters.. blue-of-sapphire-skies.. heart of gold. She makes me think of such fair and shining things.

But it was hard to get started. After trying ever so long I concluded to look in the dictionary in the list of Christian names for the meaning of Esther. I thought that might suggest something which would do for a starter.

When I went back downstairs Richard had finished his map drawing. He was lying on the leather couch, as he so often does, his eyes closed, and his hands clasped under his head, listening to Barby play the piano. He certainly did look long, stretched out full length that way, longer than he had ever seemed before. Maybe Esther's calling my attention to him the way she did made me see him in a new light, for, after staring at him critically a moment, I had to admit that he really was as good-looking as she said he was.

I carried the big dictionary over to the library table and opened it under the reading lamp. Years ago we had looked up the meaning of our names, but I had forgotten what Richard meant until my eye chanced on the word, as I glanced down the page. I didn't want to interrupt the music, but I couldn't resist leaning towards him and saying in an undertone, just to get a rise out of him:

"Listen to this, 'Apollo,' the name Richard means 'strong like a ruler, or powerful.' That's why you have the 'shoulders of an athlete.'"

But he didn't even open his eyes. Just gave an indulgent sort of smile, in rather a bored, superior way that made me want to slap him. It was as much as to say that I was carrying coals to Newcastle in telling him that.

"Well," I said, in Tippy's own tone, quoting what she always tells me when anybody compliments me in her presence, "'There's nothing lasting you will find but the treasures of the mind.' So you needn't be so uppity, mister."

He ignored the remark so completely that I determined not to speak to him again all evening. But presently I was forced to on account of the interesting fact I found on the next page. It was too interesting not to be shared.

"Beauteous Being," I remarked in a half whisper, "don't trouble to open those gorgeous dark eyes, but listen to this. The name Esther means *A Star*. Isn't that wonderfully appropriate?"

His eyes flew open quickly enough at that. He turned over on his side and exclaimed in the most interested way:

"Say, I was just thinking what a peach she is, but somehow peach didn't seem the right word. But *Star*— that fits her right down to the ground."

And that from Richard, who never looks at girls! Seeing how interested he was in her I confided in him that I was trying to write a poem to her. That she seemed to be set to music in my thoughts, and that she continually reminded me of lines of poetry like that one of Tennyson's: "Shine out little head, running over with curls, to the flowers, and be their sun."

He asked me what that was in. When I told him "Maude," he turned over on his back again and shut his eyes, with no more to say. But when Barby finished the "Reverie" she was playing and he got up to go home, he walked over to the bookcase and began hunting along the shelves. He always helps himself to whatever he wants. When he slipped a book into his pocket I looked up in time to see that it was one of the little blue and gold volumes of our set of Tennyson. Later I found he had carried off the one with "Maude" in it. I have wondered since if he would have taken the same interest in Esther if I hadn't repeated her compliment — if it was that which started him.

Tippy lost no time next morning in hunting up the auctioneer and finding whose furniture he was selling, and all about it. What he told her sent her to Wellfleet on the noon train to talk over old times with her cousin Susan Triplett. She came back at supper time with a piece of news wonderfully interesting to me.

Little John Wynne is alive and really is back on the Cape. But he's grown up now, of course. He's a physician. He worked his way through a Western college and then went to Harvard for his

medical degree. This summer he is in Yarmouth, taking care of old Doctor Rawlins' practice, while he's off on a long vacation.

I was so thrilled over all that Tippy told, that on my way up to bed I slipped across the hall for another look at the picture which I had rescued. It is a pity that "Sister Wynne" died before she knew how splendidly he turned out. She would have been so proud of him. But she must have known that he'd grow up to be the kind of man that Miss Susan says he is, because they look so much alike – the same steadfast, dependable sort of eyes and mouth.

As I stood there, holding the flickering candle, with the wax melting and running down its side, I thought how wonderful it would be if fate should some time bring our paths in life together. There are so many ways that might be done. He might be called here in consultation any day. Dr. Rawlins often is. Or he might come up here to spend a week-end as hundreds of people do, because the town is quaint and has historic associations. I wondered if I'd recognize him from his likeness to this baby picture or to his mother, if I should happen to meet him suddenly – say going into the post-office or strolling along the wharf. I felt sure something would tell me that it might be he.

Then I began imagining the most dramatic scene, just as if I were reading it in a novel of which I was the heroine. I would be taking part in an entertainment at the Town Hall, giving the Fire-fly dance maybe, first with the spot-light following me, and then with hall and stage darkened to give that wonderful fire-fly effect, and all the tiny points of electric lights hidden in my costume flashing on and off. And *he* would be watching out there in the darkness, from the front row, watching intently every graceful move.

Then all at once something would go wrong behind the scenes. A cloud of fire and smoke would suddenly sweep across the stage, shutting me off from escape and almost suffocating me. There would be a moment of awful silence while the audience gazed transfixed with horror. Then out of the darkness *he* would leap forth, tearing off his coat as he sprang up on the stage to wrap it around my filmy dress, already aflame, and I would fall unconscious in his arms, overcome by the smoke.

Long hours afterward when I opened my eyes, his face would be bending anxiously over me, and I'd smile wanly up at him, and he'd say in a choking whisper, "Thank heaven, she lives!" I would be lying in this downstairs guest chamber instead of my own room, this being handier, and presently he'd see this picture of himself hanging on the wall. Then – well, suffice it to say, it would lead finally to a beautiful and touching scene like the one I saw at the movies Wednesday afternoon, in the last act of "The Harvest Moon."

After I went upstairs that night, I thought of still another way for us to meet, which I shall write down because it would make a good scene in a novel, and I am beginning to think I shall start another one soon instead of "Divided," which now seems amateurish and childish to me. This is the scene.

I would be a beautiful Red Cross nurse, serving with the Allies somewhere in France. Into the ward, where I was keeping vigil some night, would be brought a wounded officer, a member of the medical corps who had risked his life giving aid to the dying in the trenches. He would be too badly hurt for me to recognize him at first, till I found his mother's picture over his heart, and my calling his name would bring him back to consciousness.

"How did you find me?" he would murmur feebly. "How did you know?" And I'd say, "Because, far away across the seas in my old home on Cape Cod, hangs the picture of 'little John Wynne,' as he used to be. My guardian angel led me hither."

"You.. are my.. angel," he would whisper, and relapse into unconsciousness. I could make it awfully effective to have him die, after I'd nursed him tenderly for weeks, but I can't bear to. I'd rather have it end the way I'd want it to end in real life if I should really meet him on a foreign battle-field.

Probably, though, if I ever do meet him, it'll be just my luck to be coming in from blue-berrying the way I was last week with a bee-sting on my lip that swelled it up till I was a sight for the gods.

Oh, if we could only make things happen actually the way we can in our day-dreams, what a thrilling thing Life would be from start to finish!

CHAPTER VI

THE ONE AND ONLY STAR

"Fair as a star, when only one
Is shining in the sky."

That's Esther. She has been here two weeks, and all that time I've been trying to write a poem to her which would do her justice. It is impossible. So, since coming across the above line from Wordsworth, I've simply called her "Star" and given up trying. She likes to have me call her that.

She is so wonderful that it is a privilege just to be in the same town with her. Merely to feel when I wake in the morning that I may see her some time during the day makes life so rich, so full, so beautiful! How I long to be like her in every way! Since that cannot be I try to live each hour in a way that is good for my character, so as to make myself as worthy as possible of her friendship. For instance, I dust the hind legs of the piano and the backs of the picture frames as conscientiously as the parts that show. I work overtime on my music instead of skipping practice hours as I have sometimes done in the past. The most unpleasant tasks I go through gladly, feeling that the rubbing of such, although disagreeable, puts a shine on one's soul in the same way that a buffer polishes the nails.

At first Richard laughed at what he called my infatuation, and said it didn't pay to take Emerson's advice and "hitch your wagon to a star." You have to jerk along at such a rattling gait to keep up that it soon wears out an ordinary mortal. But before he realized what had happened to him his wagon was hitched as firmly as mine, and to the same star.

Esther loves to motor, so he takes her for a long drive every day when his cousin James doesn't want the machine. As he furnishes his own gasoline for such pleasure trips, he hasn't saved very much of his wages since she's been here, to put in his "Going abroad" fund.

Every time I go to the Gilfred's, Esther passes me a freshly opened box of candy. All the boys send it to her, but twice in the last week I've been sure it was from Richard. The first one had a card lying on top that she turned around for me to read. No name – just a pencilled line – "Queen Rose of the rose-bud garden of girls." But I know Richard's handwriting as well as I know my own. Besides he learned that very quotation from me. The next time the card was printed instead of written, but there was a pansy drawn in the corner, and the sentence was in French.

Esther asked me to read it. She said she was so rusty in her French she wasn't sure she had translated it correctly. It said "Pansies are for thought." Then I remembered the pansy bed out by the Gilfreds' side porch. Richard had a big purple one in his button-hole the other day when he came back from there. But that was no proof, of course, because I'd seen George Woodson with one, and also Truman Long. Truman draws almost as well as Richard and is always making marginal sketches on things, but Truman never took any of the languages but dead ones.

But later on when Esther said she and Richard were going to read some fables together to help her brush up her French, I was pretty sure he had sent that second box. I was altogether sure when he came over the second time with that same pansy in his buttonhole, so dry and dead it was all shriveled up. I knew just how he felt about it, that it was too sacred to throw away. I feel the same way about whatever her fingers touch. So just to let him know that I understood and sympathized like a real sister I picked up Barby's guitar and in an off-hand sort of way began to sing an old song of hers that he knows quite as well as I do.

"Only a pansy blossom, only a withered flower,
Yet to me far dearer than all in earth's fair bower."

I hadn't the faintest intention of teasing him, but he seemed to take it that way. He got as red as fire and shrugged his shoulders impatiently and strode out of the room as if he were provoked. It seems so queer to think of *him* having any sentiment in connection with a girl, when he's always been so indifferent towards them. Still, Esther is so star-like, so high above all other girls that I don't wonder that even he has yielded to her magic influence.

All the boys are crazy about her. George Woodson spends most of his waking hours there. He sits around in the hammock with his ukelele, waiting for her to come out, and if they have an engagement and go off and leave him, he just sits and waits for them to come back. Truman Long has composed a serenade dedicated to her that's really awfully sweet, and when they dance at the Gilfreds' of an evening the boys break in so continually that Esther doesn't get to dance around the room without changing partners. It must be heavenly to be so popular.

Babe Nolan has a sentence copied in her memory book which she says is a test of whether one is truly in love or not. She thinks it is from Emerson. "When a single tone of one voice can make the heart beat, and the most trivial circumstance associated with one form is put in the amber of memory. When we become all eye when one is present and all memory when one is gone."

She says she was all eye when she used to be with the One who wrote those letters which are now in that bedpost somewhere in the Salvation Army or the White Mountains, and she was all memory when he was gone. And if it happened that it was his voice which answered when she called up the grocery where he clerked, she was all of a flutter, and couldn't remember whether her mother told her to order starch or stove polish. I wonder if I shall ever know that blissful sensation.

According to Babe's test I am sure of the last two items in Richard's case. He certainly is all eye when Esther is present, and the most trifling thing she says or does is cherished in the amber of his memory. I can tell from the way he keeps coming back to them in a round-about way without mentioning her name.

Barby has noticed the difference in him, too. He doesn't come to the house as often as usual for one thing, and he talks about something besides war. He doesn't mention Esther's name to Barby, but he brings up subjects connected with her that he's never been interested in before. Things they've discussed at the Gilfreds', such as the difference between Southern and Northern girls, and what constitutes charm in a woman, and why angels are always painted with golden hair and nobody ever thinks of there being brunette angels with snappy dark eyes.

When I told Barby he was helping Esther brush up her French, she gave a funny sort of a groan, and said, "Of all the arrows in the little god's quiver that is the deadliest." When I asked what arrow, she said, "Conjugating a familiar verb in a foreign tongue with a – " Then she broke off suddenly and asked what kind of a girl I thought Esther really was. She said if she were the right kind it would do Richard worlds of good to be interested in her, but she couldn't bear to think of the dear boy being disillusioned this early, or having his confidence in woman-kind shaken by a shallow little flirt.

I told her that shallowness and coquetry were not to be mentioned in the same breath with Esther. That while Richard's a nice boy, and feeling towards him as I do, as if he were a real brother, I want him to have the very best things Life can give him, I don't consider him fine enough and noble enough for such an angel as Esther. With her lofty ideals only a Sir Galahad or King Arthur himself is worthy of her.

Barby has met her several times, but only when there were a lot of others present. She had no chance to talk with her and see what a truly fine and strong character she has. She could see only in a general way that she is lovely and gracious. So, not knowing her as I know her, she reminded me again of that old prism of mine and the way I used to go about with it in front of my eyes, putting rainbows around everything in sight.

She asked if I was sure I wasn't looking at Esther in some such way, putting a halo of perfection around her that was largely of my own making. She said she did that twice when she was in her early teens. Once it was a music teacher she was infatuated with, and once her roommate at boarding

school. She looked upon them as perfect, and nearly died of disappointment when she discovered they were only ordinary mortals.

It hurt me dreadfully to have her think my adoration of Esther was nothing but a schoolgirl infatuation. She must have seen how I felt and she must have changed her mind about Esther, for lately she has been perfectly lovely about encouraging our intimacy. She says she'd like for me to invite her to the house often, and that I may have her here for a week after her visit with Judith is over. And she suggested several things we might do for her entertainment, such as a picnic at Highland Light, and a motor-boat trip over to the weirs to see the nets hauled in.

An age has gone by since I wrote of the above plans. There has been no chance to carry them out, because the very next day Mrs. Gilfred went to Boston and took Judith and Esther with her for a week. Ever since they left I've gone around humming:

"What's this dull town to me?
Robin's not here."

Only I change it to "My Star is not here."

The only thing that makes the loneliness bearable is that Barby has a guest, a Miss Helen Crewes, who is a Red Cross nurse. She is going to Flanders very soon, and she is up here resting. She gives "First Aid" lessons to Barby, Tippy and me in the evenings.

Tuesday when the Busy Bees met here she put on her uniform and went down and talked to the girls. She seemed so wonderful and so set apart, all in white with the Red Cross blazing on her forehead, and she talked so inspiringly that the girls were ready to rise up and follow her to the death. They didn't want to go home when the time came, but hung around begging her to tell some more. And Minnie Waite said that if anybody in town would start a Melting Pot like the one Miss Crewes told about to put your jewels in for the cause, she'd throw in her gold thimble and her locket and her silver friendship bracelet that needs only one more link to complete it.

Barby hasn't invited any of our friends to meet Miss Crewes yet, because she's just off a hard case that nearly wore her out. She says she must store up every bit of strength she can get from the dunes and the sea, for what lies ahead. So she sits down on the beach hours at a time, and goes on long walks by herself. When I take her out in the boat she scarcely says a word. But in the evenings while she's teaching us first aid bandaging, etc., she talks so thrillingly of her experiences and what her friends are doing over there that I could listen all night.

Barby made several attempts to get Richard to come over and meet her, but he hasn't been near here since Esther went to Boston. He always makes some excuse when Barby telephones. Barby says it would do him good to meet a woman like Miss Crewes. That she'd wake him up out of the trance he is in, and rekindle his old enthusiasms. Miss Crewes is middle-aged, for she's at least thirty-eight, and she's very plain, except when she talks. Then her face lights up till you feel as if a lamp had suddenly been brought into the room.

I know now what Barby meant by trance. It is the same thing as being "all memory when one is gone." Yesterday Babe Nolan and I were walking along the street together, she eating an apple, when Richard drove by without seeing us. It was up along in one of the narrowest turns, where he had to pass so close to the board walk that the machine nearly grazed it. Yet he went by, perfectly unconscious of us. Never looked to the right nor the left, and never even heard when I called to him. Usually he is on the look-out to wave his hand to anybody he knows. When he had gone by Babe said:

"That boy doesn't know whether he's in the body or out of the body. Somebody ought to tell him about Esther Gilfred. It's a shame to let him go on that way making a goose of himself."

"Tell him *what* about her?" I demanded.

"Oh, that it's all a bluff about her brushing up her French. She doesn't know enough French to brush. All she does is to hold the dictionary while he reads. She can't even find the words by herself

half the time. Besides she's years older than he is, although she passes for the same age. And worse yet —*she's engaged.*"

I was so furious that I contradicted her hotly, but she just looked at me over the apple she was biting into, with the calm, unruffled gaze of an old Aztec. Babe can be the most provoking person at times that ever lived. She prides herself on having a mathematical mind, and being exact about facts and figures. The worst of it is she usually is, and will go any length to prove she's right. Although I know in this case she *must* be mistaken, it worries me in spite of myself.

She said that one day at the Gilfreds' they were laughing over some old photographs of Esther and Judith, taken when they were babies. On the back of one was written: "This is our little Esther at the age of six months and six days." It was signed with her father's name and the date. Esther snatched it away and tore it up before anyone else saw it, but, Babe says, counting up from that date to this, Esther is all of three years older than Richard. She is twenty and a half.

And she said that twice while she and Viola were visiting in Yarmouth, their Aunt Rachel took them to a hop in Barnstable. Both times Esther, who was visiting in Barnstable then, was there with the man she's engaged to. He's a doctor. They met at a house-party when he was a medical student at Harvard and she was at a finishing school near Boston. Her aunt told Babe's aunt all about it. They've been engaged nearly a year, but Esther won't have it announced because she says it would spoil her good times wherever she goes. She'd never make any more conquests. He's so busy establishing his practice that he can't pay her the attention and give her the things that the other men do.

When Babe told me that I felt as if the solid ground were giving away under my feet. She seemed perfectly sure that what she was telling was the straight, unvarnished truth. And yet, I cannot, I *will* not believe that Esther would stoop to deceit in the smallest matter. She is the soul of honor. She *couldn't* be sacredly betrothed to one man and then go on acting exactly as if she wasn't, with another. Besides, I heard her say one day that she is just Judith's age, which is seventeen, and another time that she was "heart whole and fancy free."

When I triumphantly quoted that last to Babe to prove she was wrong she swallowed another bite of apple and then said, "Well, a coquette might be all that and at the same time engaged. And she *is* engaged, and I can prove it."

All I could trust myself to say was, "Babe Nolan, your remarks are perfectly insulting. I'll thank you to remember you're talking about my very best friend and the very finest and sweetest girl I've ever known in my whole life."

With that I drew myself up in my most freezing manner and walked off and left her. I've wished since that I'd thought in time to hurl that quotation from Shakespeare over my shoulder at her, but I didn't think of it till I was nearly home:

"Be thou chaste as ice, as pure as snow,
Thou shalt not escape calumny."

Those statements of Babe's were nothing but out and out calumny.

CHAPTER VII

A MODERN SIR GARETH

Yesterday morning, just to oblige me, Miss Crewes put on her Red Cross uniform and went out in the garden with me to let me take some snapshots of her. Barby came out to watch us, sitting on the stone bench under the apple tree, with her knitting. I was using my last film, posing Miss Crewes among the hollyhocks by the garden wall, when we heard a machine drive up and stop out in front. The next minute Richard came dashing around the corner of the house, bareheaded, and calling Barby in such a breathless way that I knew he had exciting news from the front.

Then he caught sight of her under the apple-tree, and came striding across the grass to her, his head up and his face fairly shining. As we walked over towards them we caught parts of his sentences, "It's Dad – all banged up and in the hospital. One of the bravest things – so proud of him – it chokes me."

He didn't even see us when we joined them, for he had pulled a handful of letters out of his pocket, and was shuffling them over to find the one that brought the news. A comrade of Mr. Moreland's had written it and his nurse added a postscript. No one thought to introduce Miss Crewes and he never seemed to notice a stranger was present till he finished reading. And then there didn't seem to be any need of an introduction. She just held out her hand with tears in her eyes and that wonderful light in her face which comes when she talks of sacrifice and heroism, and he gripped it as if they were old friends.

That's what they've seemed to be ever since. I think the sight of that red cross blazing on her uniform waked him up to the fact that she is connected in a way with the same cause his father is suffering for now in the hospital, and that she would be in sympathy with his desire to get into the service, and possibly might be able to help him. He couldn't stay then, because his Cousin James was in the machine out in front, waiting for him. But he promised to come back later, said there were a hundred questions he wanted to ask her.

It seems strange that, in the midst of hearing such a big vital piece of news about a real hero, I should notice a trifle like the following. When Richard took the handful of letters from his pocket and began shuffling through them to find the one from France, I saw without being conscious that I was staring at them, that they were all strangely familiar – square and pale blue. In his excitement he dropped one, and there on the flap of the envelope were the two long slim silver initials that I know so well, "E. G." I had several notes written on that same silver and blue stationery before Esther went to Boston, though none since.

I wasn't conscious of counting them as he passed them from hand to hand, but I must have done so automatically, for I seem to remember as far as five, and that it was the sixth one he dropped. He was so absorbed in the news that he didn't realize he was making a public display of Esther's letters, though of course nobody could recognize them but me. I think maybe for the moment she was so far in the background of his thoughts that she lost her importance for him.

But not so with me. Mingled with a thrill of happiness over Richard's news, was a feeling that my faith in Esther had been vindicated. She *couldn't* have written to him six times in seven days if she had been sacredly pledged to another. Babe Nolan is wrong for once in her life, and I shall have the joy of telling her so before this week is out. I know I am not putting a rainbow around Esther. It is simply that love gives me a clearer vision than the others have – the power to see the halo of charm which encircles her.

This has been such a wonderful day that I can't close my eyes until I have made a record of it. First, *I have seen Doctor John Wynne!* And second, I've found out something about him which makes me honor and admire him more than any man I know except Father.

Miss Crewes told us the story, but she didn't intend to tell us his name, nurses being bound to respect a confidence. It came out quite by accident. She was dreadfully distressed at the slip and made us promise we'd never repeat it to a soul. It happened this way:

Richard had the machine to do as he pleased with today, Mr. Milford being out of town, and he and Barby arranged a little picnic for Miss Crewes. He's taken the greatest fancy to her. We started out soon after breakfast and drove for hours through the perfectly heavenly summer morning, stopping at each little village along the Cape as we came to it, to tack up some posters. They were posters different artists had painted for that French Relief entertainment, which has been postponed so many times.

At lunch time we stopped by the side of the road in the shade of a pine grove, so close to the water that we could see the blue shining through the trees. It was such a fascinating, restful spot that we sat there a long time after we finished our lunch.

Richard stretched out full length on the pine needles with his hat over his eyes, and the rest of us took out our knitting. I knew he was thinking of Esther, for presently he brought up a subject which we have discussed several times at the Gilfreds', which she was particularly interested in. It's whether the days of chivalry are dead or not, and if men were not nobler in the days of King Arthur, when they rode forth to deeds of prowess and to redress wrongs, than they are now when their highest thought is making money or playing golf.

Esther always took the side that nobody nowadays measures up to the knights of the Round Table, and that she wished she could have lived when life was picturesque and romantic instead of in these prosaic times. I think what she said rather rankled in Richard's mind, because I've heard him refer to it several times. Naturally I sided with Esther, for her arguments seemed unanswerable. Today I quoted some of them.

That is what led to Miss Crewes telling one of her experiences. She was red-hot for the other side, and said I might name any deed of chivalry mentioned in the "Idylls of the King," and she could match it by something equally fine, done in this day of the world, by some man she was personally acquainted with.

Instantly I thought of the story of "Gareth and Lynette," for that is one that Esther and George Woodson had the biggest argument over. The part where Gareth saves the baron's life, and when asked what reward he would have – "*What guerdon will ye?*" – answers, "*None! For the deed's sake have I done the deed.*"

Esther once said she thought that was one of the noblest sentences in all literature. As soon as I quoted it Richard raised himself on one elbow and then sat up straight. He could see by Miss Crewes' face that she had a story worth telling.

"For the deed's sake have I done the deed," she repeated to herself as if searching through her memory. Then after a moment she said triumphantly, "Yes, I have a Sir Gareth to more than match yours. He is a young physician just beginning to make good in his practise, and he's had a far harder apprenticeship to win his professional spurs than ever Gareth served, as scullion in the King's kitchen."

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